Surgical Insertion of a Hickman Line

What is it?

A Hickman line is a long thin flexible catheter that gives access to the blood stream **(Figure 1)**. It is used to administer medicines and fluids. The main advantage is it reduces the need for needles. The Hickman catheter will last many months.

How is it inserted?

A Hickman Catheter is inserted under a general anaesthetic in the operating suite. You will be asleep for the procedure and the anaesthetist manage any pain. The surgeon will make two small cuts **(Figure 2)**. One will be on the chest where the catheter enters the body and the other on the neck where it enters the blood vessel.

Dressings

A clear plastic water resistant dressing keeps the cuts clean and dry, and some Hickman lines will have a securing dressing. Dressings are changed weekly, or earlier if needed, to keep the cuts as dry as possible.

Pain

When in hospital pain or discomfort is managed by the nurse. At home you can use a cold compress on the site and take paracetamol if required. Ask the nurse if you have any questions or need more information.

After an anaesthetic

Eating — light foods like sandwiches, soup and jelly are recommended. Babies should feed as normal.

Vomiting — feeling sick or vomiting once or twice after leaving hospital is normal. Stop eating for an hour and then try light foods again. If vomiting continues please call your doctor.

Activity — rest for a day after a Hickman line insertion, with adult supervision.

At Home

It is very important to keep the Hickman line clean. Do not allow it in the bath water or let it dangle near underwear or nappies. The nurse will show you how to secure a Hickman line so it is safe and stays clean. Inspect the spot where the catheter leaves the body every day and report any changes straight away. Always keep the clamps closed.

Remember to consult your doctor if:

- Vomiting continues after leaving hospital
- You have a temperature
- Area becomes red, swollen or painful
- Bleeding continues under your dressings

Always call if you have questions or notice anything unusual.

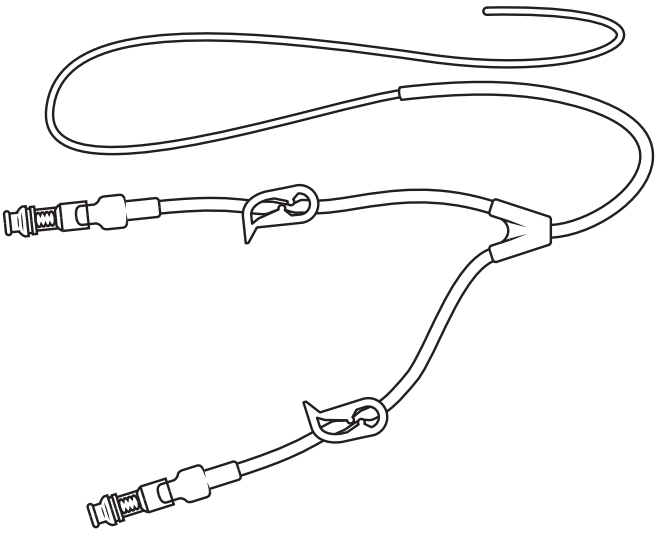

Figure 1. A dual Hickman line

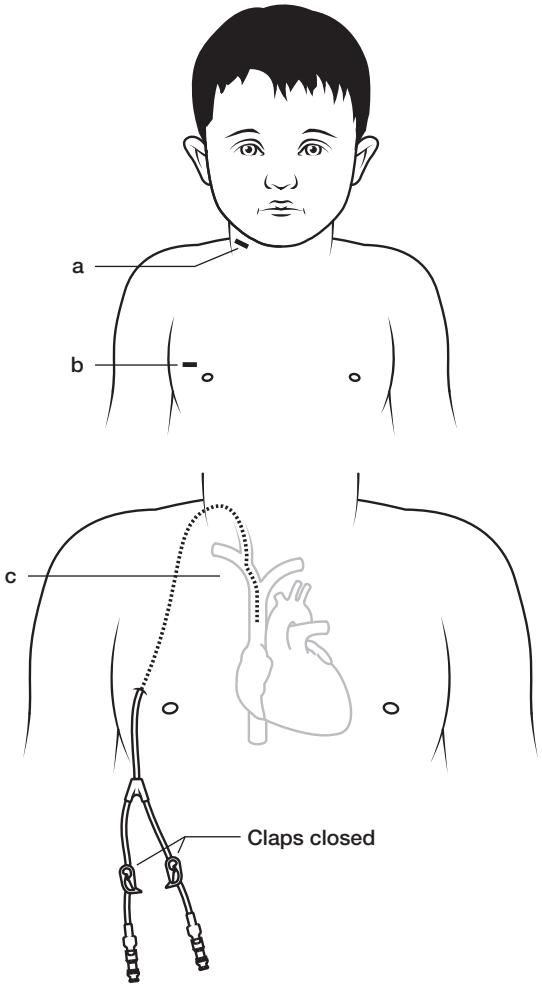

Figure 2. The Hickman line is inserted through two small cuts **(a,b)** and the catheter feeds into a vein (superior vena cava) **(c)**

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